ART EXHIBITION CATALOGUES REPUBLISHED ON MICROFICHE

Published on microfiche by: Somerset House, 417 Maitland Avenue, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666.

Date of publication and production of master: 1975.

Series: The purpose of this series is to make available those catalogues that have lasting interest through their text or their illustrations. Catalogues and cumulations of titles in the series are available from the publishers.

Serial numbers: Each title is given a seven-figure serial number in the top right-hand corner of the microfiche title strip. This is an accession number. The first figure indicates the number of the list in which the title first appears. The first three-figure group signifies the gallery or museum, the second three-figure group signifies the accession number for that title.

Copyright: The microfiche edition is the copyright of Somerset House (RMRCO Inc.) 1976. Any rights relating to the full-size edition reside with the original copyright holders.

Technical data: Producing laboratory: NCR Corporation, Beltsville, Maryland 20705.

DOMELA

FEBRUARY - MARCH 1961

DOMELA

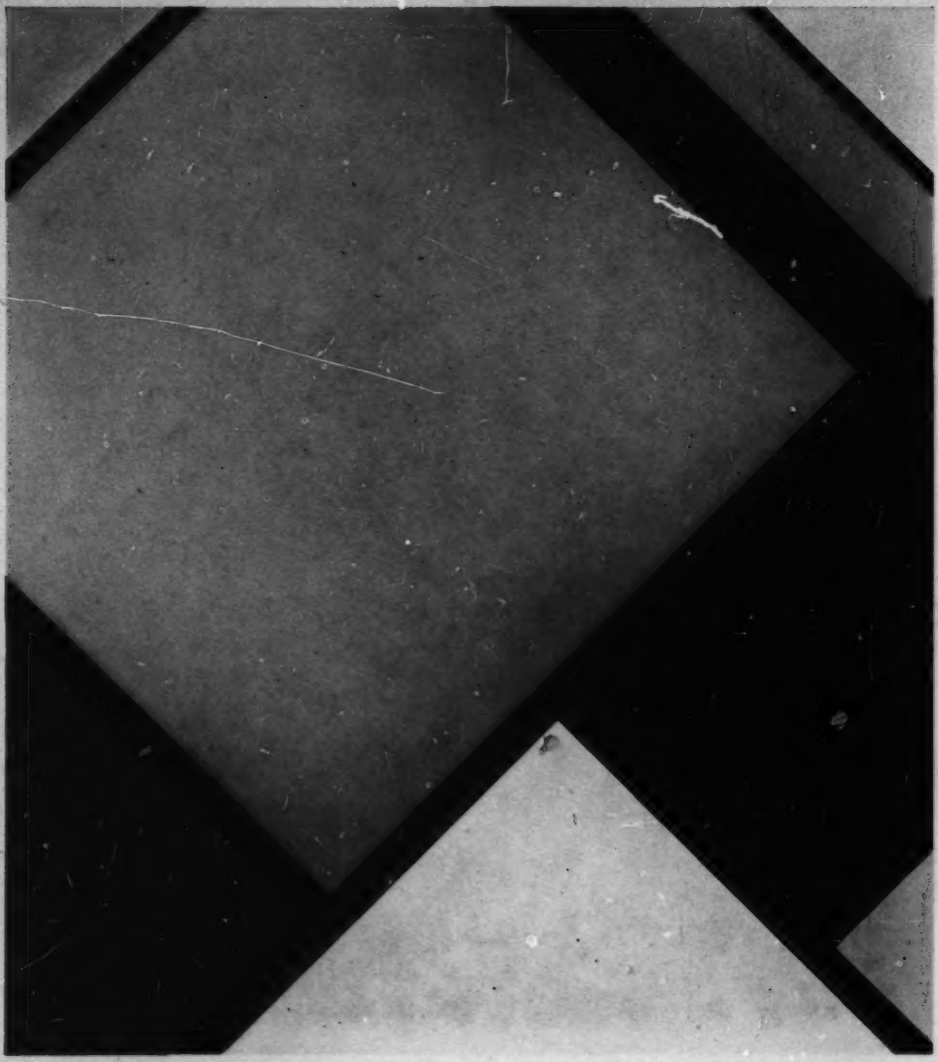
PAINTINGS

CONSTRUCTIONS

TABLEAUX-OBJETS

1924-1960

GALERIE CHALETTE 1100 MADISON AVENUE NEW YORK



6 Neoplastic Composition Number 8A

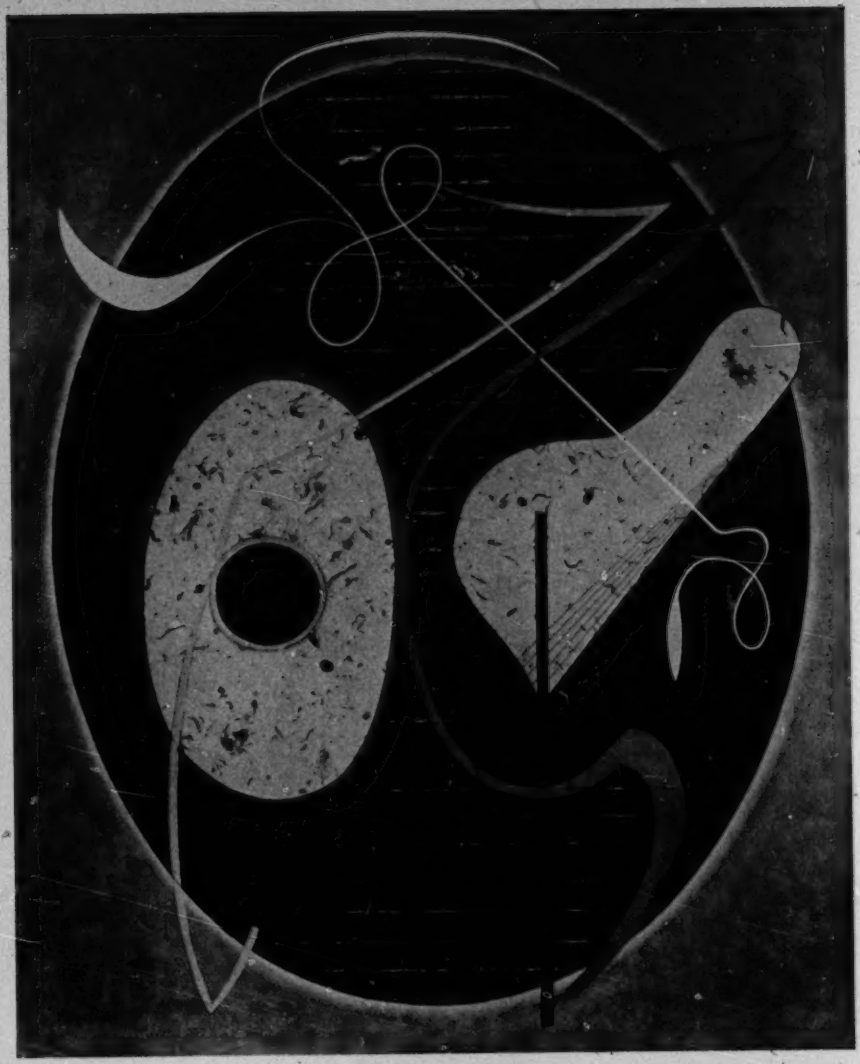
CESAR DOMELA BY H. L. C. JAFFÉ

Associate Director of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

In the panorama of today's art, the work of Cesar Domela stands out in striking isolation —like one of those massive granite rocks on the northern plains. Among those who feel strongly about spontaneous blots and matter made animate—those who approve and those who detest—the calm perfection of Domela's tableaux-objets impress the viewer as belonging to a world that has disappeared—a past civilization.

Yet Domela was one of the first to reveal the life of matter in the domain of the plastic arts; and as a precursor, but in an entirely different spirit, he was able to quicken matter by giving it both a plastic and a visual life. Today, when so much lively effort is devoted to discovering how matter can serve the plastic arts, we must acknowledge that Domela's researches were thirty years—a whole generation—ahead of the current quest. At the same time we must also recognize that Domela's experiments and discoveries arose from preoccupations and perspectives altogether different from those of today: they arose from a need for order and harmony. As for the evolution of Domela himself, the human history of his work gives evidence.

Cesar Domela Nieuwenhuis was born in Amsterdam on January 15, 1900. His father, descendant of a line of Protestant ministers, was one of the leaders of the Socialist movement in the Low Countries. After finishing school, Cesar immediately chose art as his calling and devoted himself to painting. His first works—painted in Bern and Ascona, Switzerland —revealed a marked tendency toward abstraction, toward domination of the forms in

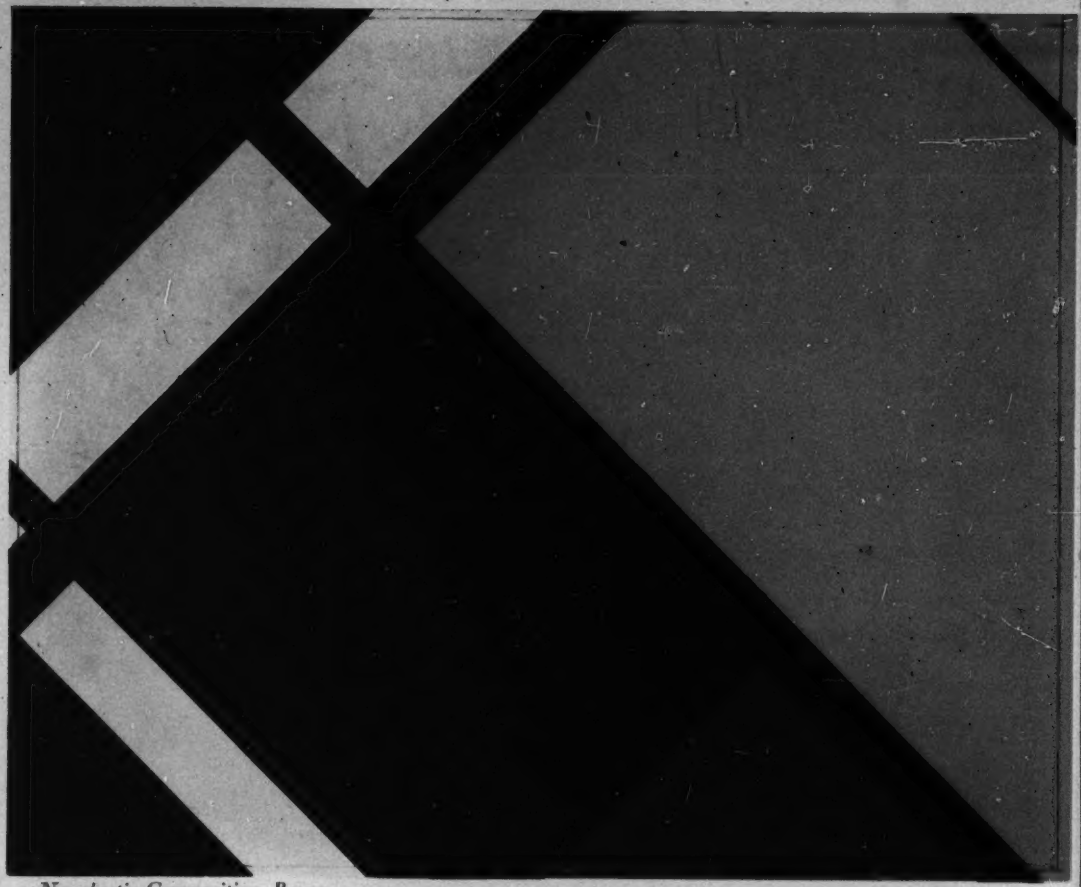


7 Collage with Black Oval

nature. In 1924, his meeting with Mondrian in Paris gave him a road to follow: he joined the de Stijl group and accepted the strict puritanical discipline of that lofty and spiritual movement. During this first period in Paris, from 1924 to 1927, he eliminated all trace of nature from his painting. It was during this period, and in this spiritual atmosphere, that Domela became a strictly abstract painter, ascetic in the limitation of his plastic vocabulary.

But very quickly a need—an inherited need—for independence made itself felt. Domela tried to free himself from a conformism and a dogmatism that could have stifled the adepts of de Stijl. Timidly at first, and with no desire for originality—vanity does not exist in Domela's world—he sought his own way. In Berlin, where he came to live in 1927, he began to add a third dimension to the vocabulary of de Stijl, with his first reliefs in superimposed planes. But in this very process, Domela introduced materials, with all their visual and tactile contrasts and possibilities, into that disciplined and ascetic world. The neo-plastic diamond-shaped composition of 1930 is an example of this. At the same time it marked his point of departure for much more remote discoveries: planes in plexiglas and figures outlined in copper carry the rhythm of the composition toward the viewer, in space. At the same time these complex elements of copper and glass create contrasts in materials, parallel to those "contrasts in forms" which Fernand Léger had so clearly worked out during those same years. Materials enrich the emotional content of the work by creating space for themselves—defining themselves by reciprocal contrast.

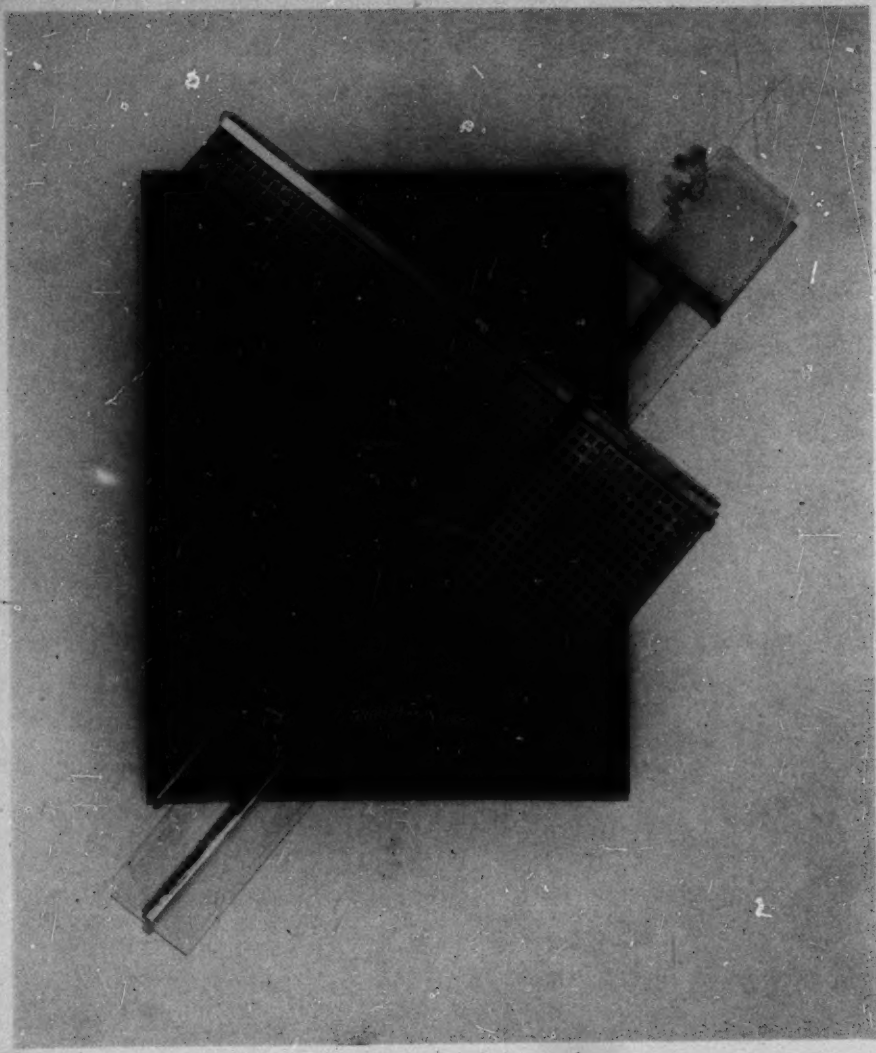
The next steps along the road to freedom emerged, as by some inexorable law, from this first experiment: new materials were integrated in his compositions by creating new contrasts. First, perforated aluminum, which added a more subtle rhythm to a composition that was still strictly rectangular and orthogonal; next, circles—forms of an absolute



4 Neoplastic Composition–Boven

rigidity grouped in an eccentric manner. And, by that very fact, a new freedom arose from the primary elements, a freedom giving rise to unexpected possibilities. For these circles are not lines traced against a background, but free elements in space which contrast with the background, which create shadows, and which, by their separated existence, set up a dialogue with the other elements in the tableaux-objets. This means that these forms, composed of materials and characterized by the material used, become "voices" in the ensemble of the plastic creation—which in turn becomes a plastic polyphony.

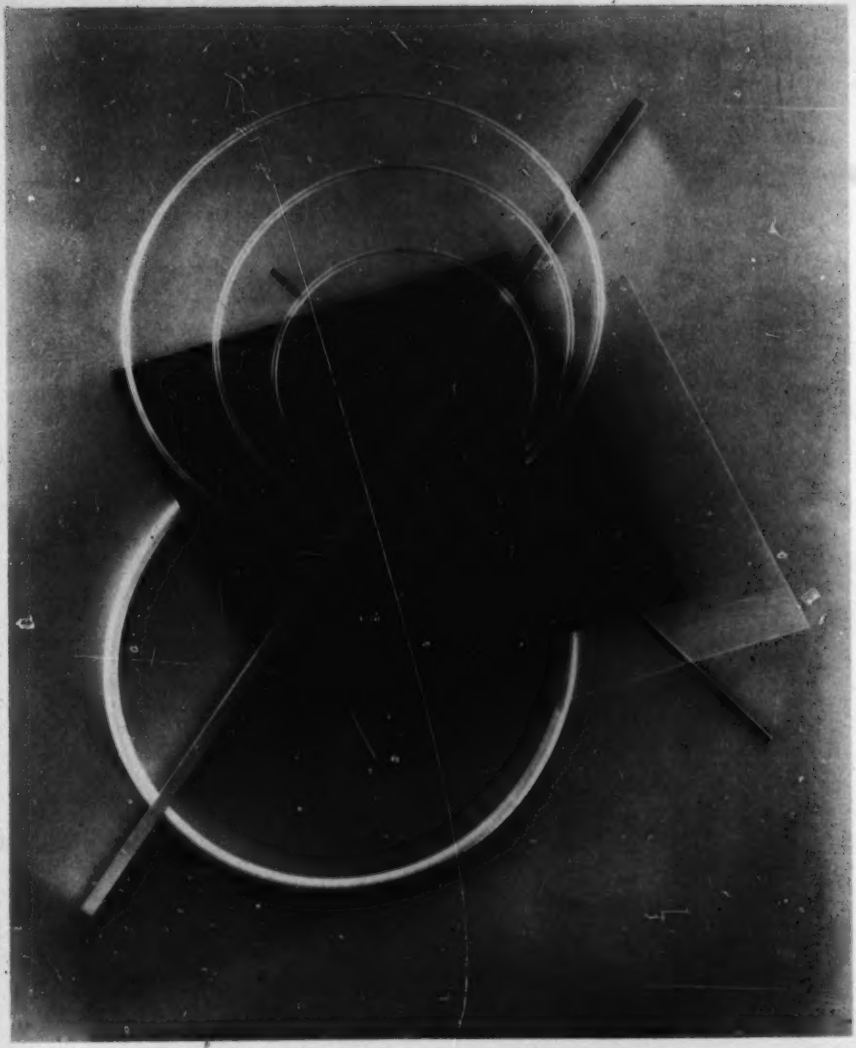
Here then, in our view, is the meaning and import of the use of different materials in Domela's work: it flows from his conception of the plastic work as a polyphonic composition. Nor is it only visually polyphonic, since the materials possess evocative qualities which go beyond their visual function. The tactile experience adds to optical perception, and contributes to the polyphony of the work. In Domela's tableaux-objets the qualities of matter characterize the different voices, thus creating the "symphonic" character and orchestration of the work. In a musical composition the "timbre" of the violins is different from that of the flutes or oboes—so it is not by chance that the composer entrusts a given musical passage to one of these instruments, while another theme is played by the instrument he feels fitted for that rhythm and cadence. Similarly, Domela makes use of the nature and "timbre" of his materials in order to characterize and heighten the qualities of the themes his various materials "play": controlled tension is entrusted to copper and aluminum; delicate modulation to polished mahogany or macassar wood. In this wise and prudent orchestration Domela shows an instinctive and intimate knowledge of his "instruments." With regard to this aspect of Domela's work, there has been much—and quite laudatory—talk of craftsmanship. This view is correct but does not go far enough, since



11 Obliques on Black Ground

it fails to take into account the symphonic nature of the work. This craftsmanship is the creative intimacy of the composer with his instruments, the inspirational devotion of the inventor to the "timbres" that make up his orchestra. And this free—but by no means arbitrary—orchestration is made possible by the very fact of abstraction; that is, by the fact that the different voices of this orchestra no longer imitate the appearance of nature but constitute a harmony of their own.

Domela's evolution is a constant enrichment of the resources of this orchestration. It is a road leading from initial discoveries to the domination of these possibilities first glimpsed and then pursued—in other words, a road toward mastery. The tableau-objet is Domela's personal invention, but he has completely subordinated himself to his method. He has been able to develop this orchestration in the most objective manner possible since he has identified himself with his instruments. But it is just this mastery which, to the majority of those who view his works, constitutes a major difficulty. They are so dazzled by the novelty and perfection of this symphonic orchestration that they are no longer able to see the composition itself and its content—yet therein lies the essence of his work. This basic misunderstanding of Domela's work causes viewers to consider his tableaux-objets as decorative works. It is the misunderstanding of the uninitiate who listens to the orchestra but does not hear the music. Our eyes, accustomed to single-instrument painting, cannot yet grasp this symphonic composition; they cannot follow the different voices in their thematic as well as harmonic extensions. It seems to me that this musical metaphor does justice to Domela's work, for it is the same spiritual content which constitutes its essence. In this respect Domela has remained faithful to the principles of the de Stijl group—and his innovations in orchestration are only outgrowths of its first principle: the representation



12 Circles and Lines on Contrasting Ground

16 Copper Playing on Asymmetric Ground

18 Burst of Red and Violet

of absolute harmony. At the same time, this artist, who has lived some thirty years in Paris, has remained fundamentally Dutch in his puritan tenacity and ascetic austerity.

When he first began painting, and later under the influence of Mondrian and Van Doesburg, Domela was oriented toward a spiritual penetration of reality, leaving its perceptible appearances to one side. The essence of reality—which he has sought in the philosophies of the Far East—he finds revealed in the laws governing the universe and man's fate, laws tending to a universal harmony that is never realized by arbitrary and accidental appearances.

In the contrast of materials Domela saw a possibility of making visible this harmony, which is the core and aim of all his creative efforts. Harmony rendered visible and meaningful by the balance of opposing elements: that is an old theory of the de Stijl group. Domela did not invent it but adapted it in his own way. To him, the opposing elements are not—as with Mondrian and his earliest artist-friends—the vertical and the horizontal. To him, the contrasts between materials and their "lines of force" have acquired the same meaning and import. In this respect, therefore, Domela has remained true to his formative years, to the period in which he was affiliated with de Stijl. From that same period too comes the distinctive spiritual nature of his works. His pictures are by no means works of decoration; they do not play with beauty or perfection of form. They strive for a speculative goal, almost a moral idea. The visual aspect and tactile qualities—in short, the esthetic appearances—of his works are never the goal itself but rather the vehicle of a spiritual experience. The tableaux-objets aim at a great calm, lucid and serene—the puritan atmosphere of the de Stijl group. And it is this very calm, this balanced tranquility, which find their source in the artist's soul.

33 Lemonwood on Blue Ground

Thus Domela's work is imbued with deep meditation on the laws and rhythms of this world—and addresses itself to the viewer's silent and attentive meditation. The world of silence and tranquility—which was, formerly, the atmosphere of de Stijl—is the personal world of Cesar Domela.

He is a rather taciturn man, usually with a pipe in his mouth to prevent words from escaping lightly from his lips. He is a man of slow and precise gestures—the very embodiment of creative patience. If there is the slightest mistrust in Domela—and he does have some—it is his mistrust of uncontrolled improvisation. He is wary, and remains on guard.

Slow and clear-eyed patience, dislike of impulsiveness—these are some of the traits of the man of the north, specifically of the Hollander. For Domela is Dutch not only physically and in appearance; his personality as an artist is also Dutch. Love of perfection achieved by long stubborn patience, control of the emotions by means of strict discipline—these are signs of the Dutch character as revealed in his art. And the result of this patience is the calm and crystal-clear perfection radiating from his works like stately, full-bodied music. This patience is indispensable. It enables him to lend an ear to his materials—listening to them and understanding them. This perfection, this equilibrium, this calm are exemplary qualities in Domela's work in the true sense of the term. In this universe which he has fashioned according to his own dream, he gives to each of us an example of the serenity which is not only to be found in the work of this gifted artist but which is also within reach of whomever strives to attain it.

WORKS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut
Smith College Museum, Northampton, Massachusetts
Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Holland
Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Museum of Modern Art, Sao Paulo, Brazil
Museum of Modern Art, Paris, France
Municipal Museum, Haifa, Israel
Gemeentemuseum, Den Haag, Holland
Bezalel National Museum, Jerusalem, Israel

BIOGRAPHY OF CESAR DOMELA

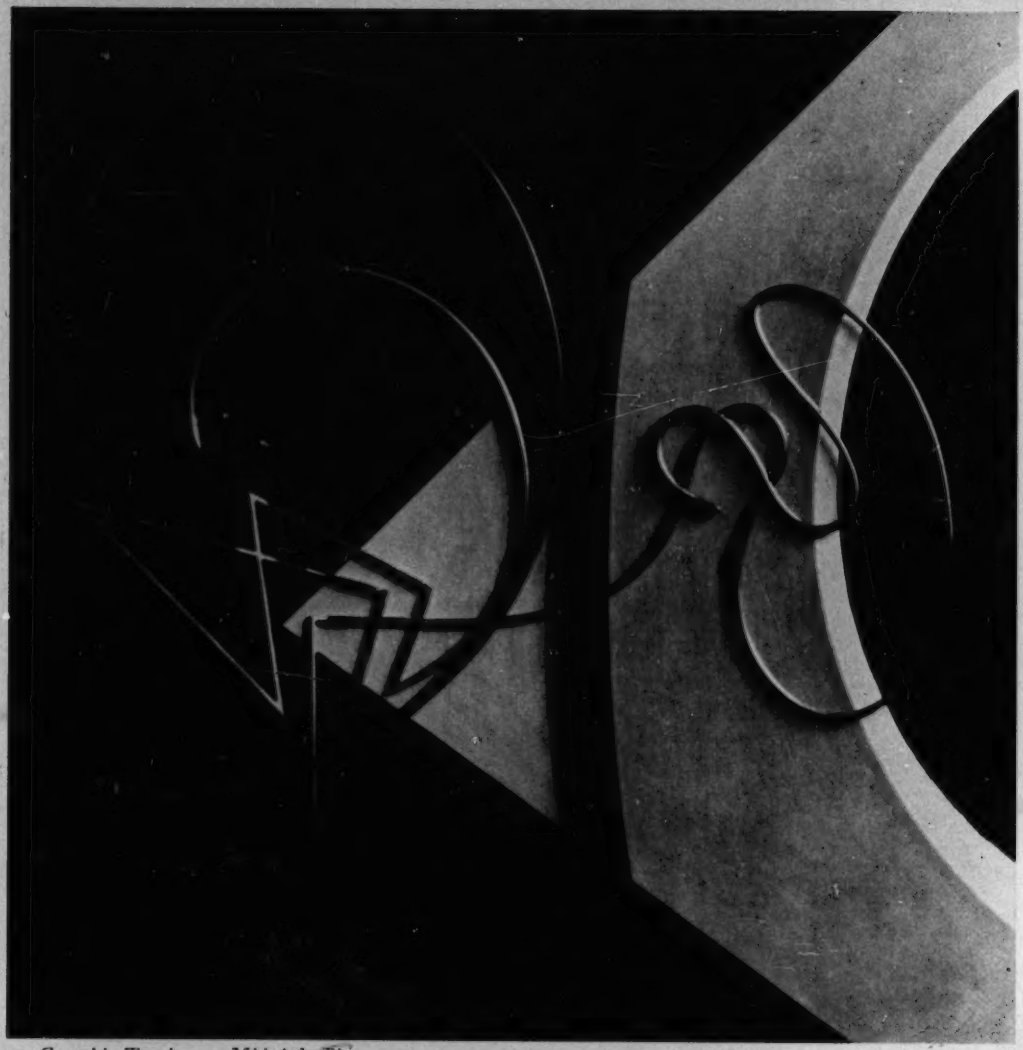
Cesar Domela Niewenhuis born in Amsterdam, Holland, January 15, 1900. Lives in Paris.

Self-taught in all matters of art. Began painting from nature in a highly stylized manner at the age of 19. Turned to pure abstract painting in 1923 and produced his first constructive works. Between 1922 and 1923 lived in Switzerland. His abstract paintings were included in the exhibition of the Novembergruppe in Berlin in 1923. Lived in Paris between 1924–25, met Mondrian and Van Doesburg and joined the De Stijl movement. Soon moved away from neoplastic principles which he abandoned for a more fluid style. Produced his first reliefs in 1928.

Lived in Berlin from 1927 to 1933. Then settled in Paris. There he began to make reliefs, using materials such as woods, metals, plastic to produce different effects of textures. These works he named Tableaux-Objets.

In 1937 became coeditor with Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp of the review "Plastique." In 1946 founded the group Centre des Recherches. Exhibited widely all over Europe and South America and was included in all important abstract Salons.

PHOTO SERGE VANDERCAM



19 Graphic Tension on Midnight Blue

CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

Asterisks (*) indicate paintings reproduced in this catalogue.

PAINTINGS

1 **Neoplastic Composition Number 5A** **1924** *oil on canvas,* 22⅞ × 22⅞ *inches*

2 **Neoplastic Composition Number 5** **1924–1925**

3 **Neoplastic Composition Number 5B** **1925** *oil on canvas,* 28 × 24 *inches*

4 **Neoplastic Composition—Boven*** **1926** *oil on canvas,* 32¼ × 40¼ *inches*

5 **Neoplastic Composition Number 6** **1926** *oil on canvas,* 31¼ × 25⅝ *inches*

6 **Neoplastic Composition Number 8A*** **1927** *oil on canvas,* 31½ × 27½ *inches*
Reproduced: Domela, Haags Gemeentemuseum,-Den Haag, 1960.

7 **Collage with Black Oval*** **1954** *collage with gouache,* 29⅞ × 23¾ *inches*

8 **Static Equilibrium** **1954** *oil on masonite,* 23¼ × 36¼ *inches*

9 **Dynamic Equilibrium** **1954** *oil on masonite,* 23¼ × 36¼ *inches*

CONSTRUCTIONS

10 **Composition** **1929**
Reproduced: Cahiers d'art, no. 5–8, Paris, 1934.

11 **Obliques on Black Ground*** **1932**
Reproduced: Cubism and Abstract Art, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936. Figure 217.

12 **Circles and Lines on Contrasting Ground*** **1933** 44½ × 35¾ *inches*
Reproduced: Axis, no. 5, London, 1936; *Transition* no. 25, 1936; *Domela,* Den Haag, 1960.

13 **Construction** **1934** 40 × 36 *inches*
Collection: Mr and Mrs Arnold Maremont.

14 **Construction** **1936** 39 *inches diameter*
Reproduced: Peggy Guggenheim, *Art of this Century,* New York, 1942.

15 **Composition** **1938** 14⅜ × 18 *inches*

16 **Copper Playing on Asymmetric Ground*** **1937** 30¾ × 24 *inches*

25 Contrasts in Flight

TABLEAUX-OBJETS

17 Relationship Between Wood, Metal, and Red Line 1944 35 × 21⅝ *inches*

18 Burst of Red and Violet* 1947 39¾ × 29⅞ *inches*

19 Graphic Tension on Midnight Blue* 1947 35⅝ × 33½ *inches*
Reproduced: Catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, São Paulo, 1949. *Domela*, Den Haag, 1960.

20 Divergent Rhythms 1948 21⅝ × 20⅛ *inches*
Reproduced: Studio, London, October 1949. Marcel Brion, *L'Art abstrait*, Paris, 1956.

21 Variations on the Theme of the Triangle 1948 45⅝ × 34⅝ *inches*
Reproduced: Réalites nouvelles, Paris, 1949.

22 Rhythms Removing Themselves 1950 47¼ × 35¾ *inches*
Reproduced: J. Bouret, *L'Art abstrait*, Paris, 1952; J. Alvard and R. V. Gindertael, *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait*, Paris, 1952.

23 Meditation 1950 39¾ × 28¾ *inches*
Reproduced: Jean Bouret, *L'Art abstrait*, Paris, 1957; *Habitat*, no. 19, São Paulo, 1954.

24 Resonance 1952 12⅝ × 21⅝ *inches*

25 Contrasts in Flight* 1953 25¼ × 41⅝ *inches*
Reproduced: Cimaise, September–October, 1954.

26 Enclosed Curves* 1955 39⅜ × 28¾ *inches*
Reproduced: Michel Seuphor, *Dictionnaire de l'art abstrait*, Paris, 1957.

27 Amaranth on Midnight Blue* 1955 45¼ × 33½ *inches*

28 Mahogany on Mauve Ground* 1956 44¾ × 33 *inches*
Reproduced: Domela, Galerie 93, Paris, 1956.

29 Copper and Ash on Pale Almond Ground 1957 48⅜ × 31⅛ *inches*

30 Copper Arabesque on Plexiglas 1958 47¼ × 34⅝ *inches*

31 Lemonwood on Blue Ground* 1958 47⅝ × 31 *inches*

32 Plexiglas Oval, Blue Line* 1958 47¼ × 33 *inches*
Reproduced: Domela, Haags Gemeentemuseum, Den Haag, 1960.

33 Macassar on Yellow Tones 1959 33 × 47½ *inches*

34 Rust on Blue Ground 1959 29⅞ × 47⅝ *inches*

35 Sharkskin Shaped by Copper on Green Ground 1959 34½ × 21⅝ *inches*

36 Red Predominating* 1960 47¼ × 32⅝ *inches*

26 Enclosed Curves

32 Plexiglas
Oval, Blue Line

27 *Amaranth on Midnight Blue*

28 Mahogany on Mauve Ground

36 *Red Predominating*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Der Cicerone, Jhrg. 17, 1. Teil, p. 153. Leipzig, 1925.

International Exhibition of Modern Art, p. 50. Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1926–27.

I 10, no. 4, p. 139, and no. 10, p. 362. Amsterdam, 1927. (Illustrated).

Anatole Jakovski. "Exposition à la Galerie Pierre." *Cahiers d'art*, vol. 9, no. 5–8, p. 209–210. Paris, 1934.

H. and B. Rasch. "César Doméla-Nieuwenhuis." *Der gefesselte Blick*, p. 44–47. Stuttgart, n.d. (Offprint).

A. H. Barr, Jr. *Cubism and Abstract Art*, pp. 208, 243. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936.

Bulletin of the Smith College Museum of Art, no. 17, p. 16. Northampton, 1936.

Circle, p. 32–33. London, Faber and Faber, 1937.

Tableaux-objets de César Doméla. Introduction by Pierre Guéguen. Paris: Galerie Pierre, 1939.

Emporium, ann. 90, p. 40. 1939.

Museum of Living Art. *A. E. Gallatin Collection*. New York–Philadelphia, 1940.

Peggy Guggenheim. *Art of this Century*, p. 92. New York, 1942.

Domela. Six reproductions en couleurs; préface par W. Kandinsky. Paris, 1943.

André Fage. "La Vie artistique à Paris: Doméla, peintre sans pinceaux." *Journal des arts*, no. 2, p. 36–37. Zürich, 1945.

Renne. *Cahiers du Sud*, no. 279, p. 347. 1946.

J. Wagenstein. "Nederlandse Parijzenaars." *Palaestra*, jrg. 2, no. 2, p. 26–28. Amsterdam, 1947.

Arts, no. 136, p. 4. Paris, October 17, 1947.

O. Domnick. *Französische abstrakte Malerei*. Stuttgart, 1948.

Ch. Biederman. *Art as the Evolution of Visual Knowledge*, p. 448, illustration p. 540. Minneapolis, 1948.

F. Boers. "Kunst uit Parijs." *Kroniek van kunst en kultuur*, jrg. 9, no. 1, p. 28. Amsterdam, 1948.

Marie Raymond. "Kunst in Parijs." *Kroniek van kunst en kultuur*, jrg. 9, no. 5, p. 158. Amsterdam, 1948.

Raymond Bayer. "César Domela." *Phoenix*, no. 12, pp. 326–331. Amsterdam, 1949.

Marguerite Kay. "Domela's Abstractions." *The Studio*. London, October 1949.

Michel Seuphor. *L'Art abstrait: ses origines, ses premiers maîtres*, p. 291. Paris, 1949.

Das Kunstwerk, Jhrg. 4, Heft 8/9, p. 92–93. Baden-Baden, 1950.

D. V. N(ijland). "Cesar Domela en H. van Hille bij Kunsthandel Huinck en Scherjon." *Maadblad voor beeldende kunsten*, jrg. 26, no. 7, p. 187–188. Amsterdam, 1950.

Chr. Zervos. "Domela (Galerie Huinck et Scherjon, Amsterdam)." *Cahiers d'art*, 25e année, II, p. 401–402. Paris, 1950.

Art d'aujourd'hui, p. 10. Paris, 1951.

R. V. Gindertael. *Présentation de l'oeuvre de César Doméla à la Sorbonne, cercle des études esthétiques Paul Valéry*. Paris, 1951.

J. Alvard and R. V. Gindertael. *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait*, pp. 100–107. (N.P.), 1952.

Til Brugman. "Kunst en karakter." *Kroniek van kunst en kultuur*, jrg. 13, no. 5, pp. 113–115. Amsterdam, 1953.

Marcel Brion. "César Domela." *Cahiers d'art*, ann. 28, no. 1, pp. 107–111. Paris, 1953.

Cahiers d'art, ann. 28, no. 2, p. 215. Paris, 1953. (Illustrated).

W. Haftmann. *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert*, pp. 275, 418, 455, 494. München, 1954.

W. Jos. de Gruyter. *Da Europese scjilderkunst na 1850*, p. 270. Den Haag-Antwerp, 1954.

Domela. Sâo Paulo, Museu de arte moderna, 1954. Introduction by C. H. Sibert.

Domela. Rio de Janeiro, Museu de arte moderna, 1954. Introduction by C. H. Sibert and M. Brion.

Visâo, p. 44. Rio de Janeiro, 1954.

Forma, no. 3. Rio de Janeiro, 1954.

Manuel Germano. "César Domela e a Abstracao Criaçâo." *Habitat*, no. 19. Sâo Paulo, 1954.

Herta Wescher. "César Domela." *Cimaise*. Paris, September–October 1954.

Publication de la conférence de Domela à Rio de Janeiro et à Sâo Paulo. *Nombre d'or*, revue du Centre international d'études esthétiques, no. 22–24. 1956.

Domela. Preface by W. Kandinsky and Marcel Brion. Paris: Galerie 93, 1956.

Til Brugman. "De kunstenaar is zijn werk." *Kroniek van kunst en kultuur*, jrg. 16, no. 4. pp. 81–83 Amsterdam, 1956.

Marcel Brion. *Art abstrait*, pp. 304–308. Paris, 1956.

Dr. H. L. C. Jaffé. *De Stijl*, p. 184. Amsterdam, 1956.

Michel Seuphor. *Dictionnaire de l'art abstrait*. Paris, 1957.

Jean Bouret. *L'Art abstrait*. Paris, 1957.

R. V. Gindertael. "*Doméla*." *Cimaise*, 4e série, no. 3, p. 39. Paris, January–February 1957.

Kosice. *Geocultura de la Europa de hoy*. Buenos Aires, 1959.

Michel Seuphor. *La sculpture de ce siècle*, pp. 44, 217, 259. Neuchâtel, 1959.

Ch. Wentinck. *De Nederlandse schilderkunst sinds Van Gogh*, pp. 60, 156. Utrecht-Antwerpen, 1959.

Cesar Domela. Introduction by Sadi de Gorter. Haags Gemeentemuseum, Den Haag, 1960.

Marcel Brion. *Domela*. Paris: Musée de poche (in preparation).

This book has been printed in an edition of 1000 copies.

The first hundred copies contain an original

numbered and signed lithograph by the artist.

This copy is number